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For Immediate Release  
June 9, 2005

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### **Patterson fighting to eradicate invasive species**

**LANSING** – Fighting the spread and destruction of invasive species in Michigan has received a major boost as the Senate voted to make protecting Michigan's ecosystem a top priority, announced Sen. Bruce Patterson, R-Canton.

"Invasive species such as the Emerald Ash Borer, Big Head Carp and Japanese Knotweed threaten Michigan daily as they have no natural enemies to keep them in check. They aggressively compete against native species," Patterson said. "We've had enough and are doing something now before our state's ecosystem is destroyed. This legislation is a giant step forward to eradicating such pests."

The Senate today passed a package of bills (Senate Bills 211-217, 507) designed to protect Michigan's environment from invasive species.

SB 216, sponsored by Patterson, establishes and creates an Invasive Species Advisory Council to keep the Legislature updated on the problems and solutions available to fight invasive plant, insect, and animal species.

The Council will be within the Department of Natural Resources and will consult with those directly affected, as well as scientific experts and public interest group representatives.

SB 217 requires that within six months after the bills' effective date, the Council must submit to the governor and the Legislature a report making recommendations on additions to, or deletions from, the lists of prohibited and restricted species. By March 1 of each year, beginning in 2006, the Council also would have to submit a report making additional recommendations.

"In the past, these pests have not come to the attention of the Legislature fast enough," Patterson said. "Our economy is staggered by their impact. The urgency of this unnatural invasion must reach legislative attention speedily. Federal programs have not been sufficient to protect our Great Lakes area. We must be proactive in this area to protect Michigan's natural beauty, our waters, our native species and our fragile economy."

The EAB is a beetle from Japan. Already it has wiped out hundreds of thousands of trees and still threatens 700,000 more in Michigan, a catastrophic loss. The carp, native to south and central China and known to reach 73 pounds, is devastating native fish. The knotweed clogs the state's watercourses. Some 161 species are now invasive in Michigan and can be counted as 'environmental terrorists.'

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